

The Honoring of SHAKESPEARE



The Statue of Shakespeare on the Gower Memorial at Stratford-on-Avon.

How the Memory of the Great Poet and Dramatist Will Be Honored By All Nations On April 23rd--the Ter-Centenary of His Death.

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SHAKESPEARE, perhaps the greatest dramatist of all time, has been honored every theatrical season in every large commercial center of the English speaking races for a century or more. The interest in his great works has grown and his genius more widely and more genuinely appreciated. As the three hundredth anniversary of his death approached it was planned to accentuate his place in the great histrionic art by having a special celebration of his name in every part of the world. But the war of the European powers has interfered with this plan and in consequence the celebration will be restricted in its extent, and it is feared much less elaborate and enthusiastic in the manner in which it will be done.

Shakespeare in Germany.

Celebrations of his supposed birthday have been held in both England and Germany for the past quarter of a century, for Germany knows his works quite as well as England. The German stage has treated him far



The famous Chandos portrait of Shakespeare now in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

The Shakespeare statue in Central Park, New York the work of J. Q. A. Ward.

more reverently than the theatres in England or in America, and the German people have ten times more opportunity to see the masterpieces of Shakespeare than have the people of London or New York.

In England the ter-centenary celebration will not be as elaborate as it would have been in times of peace, but the memory of the dramatist will not be neglected. Outdoor performances of such plays as "Mid-summer Night's Dream" and "As You Like It" will be given for the benefit of the wounded soldiers. At one or two of the beautiful country estates where these men are quartered there will be pageants showing the most notable characters of Shakespeare's plays. In London the clubs will celebrate, while at the schools appropriate entertainments will be given.

Celebration at Stratford.

The national celebration will be held at Stratford-on-Avon, the poet's birthplace, where young girls dressed

to represent Shakespeare's heroines will dance around the Gower monument—that splendid memorial set up in honor of the bard. Stratford-on-Avon has for years been the mecca of the intellectual of all lands who come to wander about the birthplace of the man whose writings have been translated into every known language. It is a well known fact that more of his productions have been printed than any other book in the world excepting the Bible. The average number of persons who pass through the door of Shakespeare's birthplace every year is thirty thousand, one-fourth of whom are Americans. The old house has been restored as far as possible and now belongs to the English Government. The poet was born in a small room facing the street which is the real show place of the house, although the kitchen and cellar are also well preserved. In the garden are flowers and trees mentioned in Shakespeare's plays. The site of "New

Place," where the poet died, is also marked, as is Tudor House which was restored by Miss Marie Corelli, the noted writer.

Trinity Church, where the bard is buried, is charmingly situated amid trees on the banks of the Avon. The poet's grave inside the church is covered with a marble slab and above it is the bust by Gerard Johnson, executed soon after Shakespeare's death, and accepted by the children of the latter as an excellent portrait. Nearby is a window representing the Seven Ages, which was erected with the contributions of American visitors. The Shakespeare Memorial Building contains a theatre in which the annual memorial performance is held, a library of rare volumes of Shakespeare's works and a picture gallery containing the famous Droeshout portrait of the poet. The man who made this picture was Martin Droeshout, a Flemish engraver, who was still in his boyhood when Shakespeare died, and it is doubtful whether he ever saw the poet and the portrait was probably engraved from a painting which was recently brought to light at Stratford. "The Ely House" portrait, a more



The "Black Bast" of Shakespeare now owned by the Garrick Club, London.

pleasing picture, hangs in the birthplace. It was formerly the property of a Bishop of Ely and was painted in the seventeenth century.

Nearby is the magnificent statue presented to the town of Stratford in 1888 by the sculptor Lord Ronald Gower. The top is surmounted by a colossal figure of the poet, and around the base are figures of Lady Macbeth (representing Tragedy), Prince Hal (History), Falstaff (Comedy) and Hamlet (Philosophy). There is also a fountain and clock tower presented to the town in 1887 by an American whose name does not appear on the gift. Charlotte, the scene of the poaching incident which started the poet on his journey to London, is a few miles away, as is the cottage where the poet courted his wife, Anne Hathaway.

The monument to Shakespeare in the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey was placed there by popular subscription in 1741. It is nearly always wreathed in flowers. In the National Portrait Gallery in London hangs the famous Chandos portrait of Shakespeare. It shows important variations from the portrait bust owned by the Garrick Club and was probably painted not many years after the poet's death from descriptions furnished by his friends. The Zoult portrait came to light in 1785, and several others, such as the Janson portrait and the Felton portrait, all show variations from the Droeshout picture—so, after all, we can only imagine what manner of man the Bard of Avon was in appearance. There is also a death mask which resembles a portrait owned by the Kesselstadt family, but neither portrait nor mask has been proven to



The German idea of Shakespeare statue by Otto Lessing at Weimar, Germany.

resemble the poet.

Honored in Denmark, France and Italy.

Denmark, Hamlet's land, has honored Shakespeare by a splendid memorial showing the poet seated in a large stone chair. The figure is both colossal and dignified. It stands in Copenhagen and is the work of L. Haseelric. There will be an elaborate presentation of Hamlet in that city in honor of the ter-centenary anniversary.

In France the people are holding a series of lectures on the art of Shakespeare, and in Paris they are especially well attended. Literary clubs are planning banquets with readings from Macbeth, Hamlet and Julius Caesar. In the rural districts the school children will give a series of pageants. At Bordeaux they will present one or two plays with elaborate staging. In Italy several of the operas inspired by Shakespeare's works will be produced. Gounod's "Romeo and Juliette" will be given with an all-star cast, while "Otello" and "Falstaff" will also be sung. Italian admirers of Shakespeare will have a banquet.

In Holland the Shakespeare Club will celebrate the day by a dinner and readings from some of his plays. They will also send a wreath to his grave at Stratford-on-Avon.



The Shakespeare Memorial in the Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, London.

Even in far away Japan there will be an outdoor performance of "As You Like It" given in Japanese. All of the Shakespeare plays have been translated into the Japanese language and have become the basis of the drama course in the school. At Tokio, Yokohama and Kioto a Shakespeare play will be given by native actors.

Greatest Celebrations Here.

For more than ten years the Shakespeare societies of our country have been preparing for the ter-centenary. Their celebration will not end on April twenty-third, as we shall likely have elaborate Shakespearean productions throughout the year. Already we have been treated to a notable production of Macbeth and The Merry Wives of Windsor by American players, and Henry the Eighth with Sir Herbert Tree as Cardinal Wolsey. Perhaps the greatest of all the celebrations will be those held by the public school children everywhere from the Atlantic to the Pacific. More than fifty thousand schools have special programs arranged for the week in which the anniversary occurs. They range from a simple reading of a play to the most elaborate pageant.

There are several statues erected in memory of the poet in this country, the finest one being on the Mall in Central Park, New York City. This is one of the best works of John Q. A. Ward. It will be wreathed in flowers on Anniversary Day.

After three hundred years the real greatness of Shakespeare is fully recognized, men and women of all nations are proud to do him homage, and in the language of one of our noted writers, "one cannot conceive of any future state of civilization where he will not reign supreme as the literary idol, for his soul is in men's hearts."



Shakespeare idealized picture from Chandos portrait.

A Sketch of the Life of the Bard of Avon, and of His Rise to the Highest Place in the World's Literature.

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THE day of Shakespeare's birth cannot be exactly ascertained. The inscription on his monument says he died on April 23rd, 1616, in the fifty-third year of his age. Tradition has fixed the same date as his birthday.

He was the son of John and Mary Arden Shakespeare, who lived on Henley street in the little English town of Stratford-on-Avon. Their home was a poor one, and the room in which the great poet was born was poorly furnished, its walls were white-washed and its ceiling consisted of uncovered rafters.

After a time unprosperous times came to the Shakespeare family and the father tried various ways of making a living, such as dealing in corn and timber, and finally opening a butcher shop. William was the third child. His early life was passed like the village boys of that age, and history does not record an act which would set him apart from other lads



The room in which Shakespeare was born (old print).

of his age. He attended the public school of the village and was studious, learning Greek and Latin. One of his biographers describes him as a "chestnut-haired, fair, brown-eyed boy, good humored and ever ready to wait upon his parents." Owing to the financial reverses of his father young William was forced to leave school at the age of fifteen and assist his father in the butcher shop. Aubrey in his biography asserts that the lad often assisted in the killing of the sheep and calves offered for sale. The father was compelled to mortgage his property. Taxes were unpaid and finally the property went under the hammer. The young man then became a clerk in an attorney's office, and how well he spent his time there is exhibited in his remarkable knowledge of law as shown in his writings.

Married at Eighteen.

At the age of eighteen he married Anne Hathaway, one of the daughters of a farmer of Shottery, a little village within a mile of Stratford. This lady was eight years his senior. Three children came of the union, two of whom survived their father. The young players frequently came to the village and the young man took an active interest in their performances and soon came to know the old English comedies and also the "stage business" of the performers. He often wished to go to London, but with a family dependent upon his slender purse it was next to impossible for him to leave his work even for a few days. A poaching expedition, however, settled the matter. It seems that he went with some others on a poaching trip to the deer park at Charcote and was

recognized and about to be arrested. In revenge he made a ballade on the owner which caused that gentleman to redouble his persecution of young Shakespeare to such an extent that the young man was obliged to leave that part of the country or to spend some time in jail as the laws against poaching at that time were severe. He left his family at Warwickshire and started for London, the land of opportunity which his genius demanded.

On reaching the city he found himself practically penniless and for a time he eked out a living by holding the horses of gentlemen outside the theatre. Some time later he seems to have found some of his strolling player friends who helped him to obtain work in a printing establishment. But this did not satisfy his ambition, and through his acquaintance with James Burbage he managed to get a part on the stage. Queen Elizabeth loved the play and was an enthusiastic patron of the player. Little wooden theatres began to spring up in various parts of London and were crowded to their capacity. Shakespeare, although he continued to act upon the stage until a few years before his death, never attained very much prominence as a player.

In 1592 his first work appeared in the shape of a narrative poem, "Venus and Adonis," dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, the poet's patron and friend. "Lucrece" followed a year

later and was dedicated to the same nobleman.

First Play.

It is not certain at what date Shakespeare's career as a dramatic author began, as his earliest dramatic exercise seems to have been whipping into shape for the stage plays which were out of date. It is generally conceded that "Love's Labor Lost" was his first original play and after that he turned out plays rapidly. In 1596, after an absence of ten years, he returned to Stratford and purchased valuable lands and assisted his father in rebuilding his fortune. About this time Hamnet, the only son of the poet, died. After John Shakespeare, his father, had received material aid he set about to obtain a coat of arms. The son was now a rising author in favor at Court and the father began to search the family tree for ancestors who had done good service for the Crown. After awhile he discovered that one of his forefathers had done service for King Henry the Seventh, and the crest was forthwith styled "gentleman" in a legal document.

Loved His Birthplace.

The poet loved his birthplace and frequently visited the village where he had now become a man of importance, in fact so important that his neighbors began to ask him for loans, some of which are still unpaid. Unlike most men of artistic temperament, he was a fairly good business man, a shrewd bargainer and a tax dodger of the keenest type, for he actually evaded the restrictions against brew-



The Ely House portrait of William Shakespeare in possession of the Trustees of the Poet's Birthplace at Stratford.

ing malt liquor for his private use. His wife's debts he left unpaid and was careless about his own. He was continually in litigation with somebody.

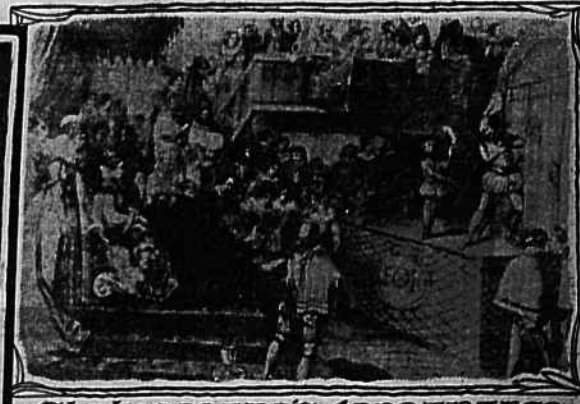
Aubrey, who was his earliest biographer, declares that he was "a handsome, well shaped man, modest and amiable and otherwise gentlemanly." From 1595 until his death he divided his time between London and Stratford, coming to the latter place to rest and perhaps to get atmosphere for his work, for in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and the "Taming of the Shrew" his references to the part of the country in which he spent his boyhood days are unmistakable. "As You Like It" too, is a play of pastoral lovers, the heroine of which Shakespeare has made one of the most enchanting women of literature.

A Favorite at Court.

He was frequently called to Court in reference to new plays and there is a tradition that Queen Elizabeth was so delighted with the humor of Falstaff in "Henry IV." that she commanded Shakespeare to continue the story and show Falstaff in love, and "The Merry Wives of Windsor" was written. So eager was the Queen to see the play that she commanded the poet to have it ready in fourteen days. Her request was fulfilled, but many Shakespearean scholars declare that on account of its being so hurriedly written the humor of Falstaff lacks the spontaneity and freshness of the Falstaff of "Henry IV."

His "Merchant of Venice" was written when the Jew was contemptible in the mind of Western Europe, where he was regarded as the personification of greed. Today the tragic figure of Shylock is one of the most commanding characters in dramatic art.

The early years of the seventeenth century were stormy ones for the poet and he was now in the mood for turning out tragedies. "Julius Caesar" was finished shortly after her death. "Hamlet" followed, and is said to be taken from a folk tale of Northern Europe of the fifteenth



Shakespeare's appearance before Queen Elizabeth.

century. Shortly after the accession of James I he showed favor to several actors, among whom was Shakespeare, and when "Othello" was presented he asked that others be given.

"Macbeth" was completed in 1606, and its Scottish background shows the suggestion of King James. "King Lear" was his next work, and in this the dramatist mounted to the sublime heights of dramatic creation. Other plays followed in quick succession and Shakespeare's fame spread over the known world.

Retired at Forty-seven.

He left London and returned to Stratford in 1611 with an ambition to become a country gentleman. He was but forty-seven years of age, but men grew old early in those days, and he felt that the time had come to retire. His sources of income had been from his plays, from his stock in the Globe Theatre, which unfortunately was destroyed by fire in 1613. He owned valuable land in Stratford from which he derived a good interest and one of his biographers is of the opinion that his income in later life was not less than fifteen thousand dollars per year. His family at that time consisted of his wife and two daughters. The oldest was already married to Doctor John Hall, and the second, Judith, wedded John Quincy, a wine merchant of Stratford, shortly before her father's death. Early in 1616 Shakespeare had a draft of his will prepared which he signed in March. It is related that he died on April 23rd, 1616, of a "feavour" after "a merry meeting" at Stratford with his old friend Ben Jonson and the poet Drayton. It is not unlikely that the cause of this fever was the unsanitary condition of the street in which he lived. Two days later he was buried inside the chancel of Holy Trinity Church. Over his grave are set in stone lines that have become familiar to the English-speaking world:

"Good friend, for Jesus' sake fore-bear
To dig the duste enclosed heere;
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
An curst be he that moves my bones."